

Powhatan in a longhouse at Werowocomoco

**“Chief Powhatan – Tidewater Titan”
This is a historical / biographical work
based on the public domain book
“Lives Of Famous Indian Chiefs”
by Norman B Wood
with edits, notes, public images and arrangement
by Larry W Jones**

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First edition - 2023

Book design by Larry W Jones

Published by lulu.com

ISBN – 978-1-312-76051-6



POWHATAN, OR WAH-UN-SO-NA-COOK.

When the English colonists first landed in Virginia, in 1607, they found the country occupied by three large tribes of natives known by the general names Mannahoack, Monacans and Powhatans.

(Note) Powhatan (c. 1547 – c. 1618), whose name was Wahunsenacawh (alternately spelled Wahunsenacah, Wahunsunacock or Wahunsonacock), was the leader of the Powhatan, an alliance of Algonquian-speaking Native Americans living in Tsenacommacah, in the Tidewater region of Virginia.

Of these the two former might be called highland or mountain Indians, because they occupied the hill country east of the Alleghany ridge, while the Powhatan nation inhabited the lowland region extending from the seacoast westward to the falls of the James and Pamunkey rivers and from the Patuxent River, which flows into the Chesapeake Bay, southward to Carolina.

Mr. Jefferson, in his "Notes on Virginia," estimates that the Powhatan confederacy at one time occupied about eight thousand square miles of territory, with a population of about eight thousand people, of whom twenty-four hundred were warriors. When it is remembered that there were thirty tribes in this coalition, and that this estimate is less than one hundred warriors to the tribe, it seems moderate enough, especially since it is recorded by an early writer that three hundred warriors appeared under one Indian chief in one body at one time and seven hundred at another, all of whom were apparently of his own tribe.

Moreover, the Powhatan confederacy inhabited a country upon which nature bestowed her favors with lavish profusion. Their settlements were mostly on the banks of the James, Elizabeth, Nansamond, York and Chickahominy rivers, all of which abounded with fish and fowl. The forest was filled with deer and wild turkey, while the toothsome oyster was found in great abundance on the shores of the Chesapeake and its numerous inlets. Indeed, the whole region seems to have been a veritable paradise for hunter and fisherman. Vast quantities of corn, too, yearly rewarded even the crude agriculture of the Indians, bestowed as it was upon the best portion of a fertile soil.



Falls Of the Rivers

Captain John Smith, the hero and historian of early Virginia, informs us that at one time "the rivers became so covered with swans, geese, ducks and cranes that we daily feasted with good bread, Virginia pease, pumpions (pumpkins) and putchamins (a wild plum), fish, fowl and diverse sorts of wild beasts so fat as we could eat them." He might have added, "And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness," but at first were ready to divide with them their ample store, for on one occasion when Smith undertook an exploring tour into the interior late in the season a violent storm obliged him and his men to keep Christmas among the savages. "And we were never more merry," he relates, "nor fed on more plenty of good oysters, fish, flesh, wild fowl and good bread, nor ever had better fires in England."

The mention of oysters here is the first account of this palatable bivalve we have found in history. They also graced the first Thanksgiving dinner, as will be seen in another chapter. But it might be asked, why is it, since Virginia was a land of such great abundance of food, we read so much of famine and "the starving time" among the colonists at Jamestown? Simply because the men sent over by King James were for the most part so idle, improvident and utterly worthless that they would have literally starved to death "with stewed pigeons flying into their mouths." Shortly after the settlement at Jamestown Captains Smith and Newport, accompanied by twenty-three others, sailed up the James river to its falls. A few miles below where Richmond now stands, near what is known as Mayo's plantation, they visited an Indian village of a dozen houses called Powhatan.

Here they met and were entertained by the leading chief, or werowance, of the Powhatan confederacy, who, strange to say, was also called Powhatan. Indeed, the English understanding but little of the Indian language, and hearing this name often mentioned, and always with awe or reverence, by turns regarded it as the name of a river, of the country, of the people, of a town and of their head sachem (chief of a confederation of tribes).

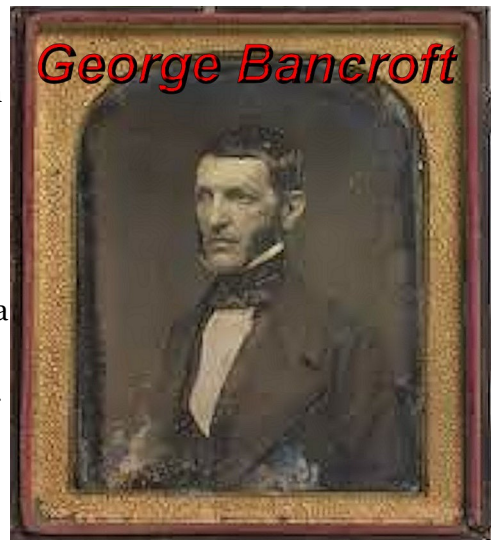
But little is known of this, the first interview between Captain Smith and company and the great sagamore (chief) and his people, but it is recorded that the English were kindly and hospitably received, as they usually were, and feasted on fruit, fish and vegetables, as well as roast deer and cakes.

Historian George Bancroft (October 3, 1800 – January 17, 1891) says the savages at first murmured at this intrusion of strangers into the country; but their crafty chief disguised his fear and would only say, "They hurt you not; they take but a little waste land."

But even Powhatan grew suspicious of a cross which Newport insisted on erecting as a sign of English dominion until the latter, probably at the suggestion of Smith, told him the arms represented Powhatan and himself, and the middle their united league. The interview ended by the return of the explorers to Jamestown, but before doing so Newport presented the chief with a hatchet, with which he was much delighted.

The English invested savage life with all the dignity of European courts. Powhatan was styled "king" or "emperor," his wives, of whom he had many, were "queens," his daughter was a "princess" and his principal warriors were "lords of the kingdom."

In his younger days Powhatan had been a great warrior. Hereditarily he was sachem of eight tribes and by his arms he subdued twenty-two others, so that at this time he was the mighty werowance, or sagamore, of thirty of the forty tribes of Virginia. This great chief has been called the Indian Cæsar, and certainly his system of government was strikingly similar to that of the Roman Empire, for the hereditary chiefs or "kings" of the subject tribes were permitted to rule their own people as before the conquest and their local laws and customs were not interfered with on condition of their paying annual tribute to Powhatan of "skinnes, beads, copper, pearle, deere, turkies, wild beasts and



corne. What he commandeth they dare not disobey in the least thing." Moreover, as if to make the resemblance more remarkable, his subjects regarded him as half man and half god, just as the Roman people regarded their emperors as demi-gods.

He is described as a "tall, well-proportioned man with a sower looke, his head somewhat gray, his beard so thinne that it seemeth none at all, his age neare sixtie, of a very able and hardy body, to endure any labor." And certainly the extent of his conquests, his unlimited power over his subjects and the pomp which he maintained invested Powhatan with no little courtly though savage dignity.

Besides this village of his own name where he entertained John Smith and Captain Christopher Newport, Powhatan had a larger town on the York river called We-ro-wo-co-mo-co, a hunting town in the wilderness called Orapax, and others. At each of his hereditary towns there was a house built in the form of a long arbor for his especial reception, and when the great chief made a visit to one of his towns a feast was made ready in advance and spread in the long house. A mile from Orapax, deep in the woods, he had another arbor-like house in which he kept all his treasures, such as furs, copper, pearls and beads, to have them ready for his burial. Though isolated, the contents of this treasure-house were never disturbed, but whether this was due to the terror inspired by the owner or to superstitious reverence is not known. Perhaps it was both.



Captain Christopher Newport (1561–1617) was a seaman and privateer. He commanded the ship "Susan Constant" in 1607 with settlers for Jamestown.

John Smith (baptized 6 January 1580 – 21 June 1631) was an English soldier, explorer, colonial governor, admiral of New England, and author. He played an important role in the establishment of the colony at Jamestown, Virginia.



It is said that Powhatan had twenty sons and eleven daughters living at the time of the Jamestown settlement. We know nothing of his sons except Nantaquans, who is described as "the most manliest, comliest and boldest spirit, ever seen in a savage."



Pocahontas, the favorite daughter of Powhatan, was thought to have been born in 1594, which would make her about thirteen years of age at the time of Captain Smith's trial before her august father. Nothing is known of her mother; she was simply one of Powhatan's numerous wives, and it is within the bounds of possibility that, growing tired of her, the chief had presented her to one of his subjects whom he wished to honor, for such was his custom.

The Indians believed that a knowledge of the real names of persons gave their enemies power to cast spells upon them, so they were frequently known by several names and endeavored to conceal their true ones. They also had a custom of changing the name upon great occasions.

Pocahontas, signifying, it is said, "Bright Stream Between Two Hills," was the household name of Powhatan's "dearest daughter." She had also two other names, Amonate and Matoaka, the last being her "real name." Besides her favorite brother, Nantaquans, we know the names of two sisters, Matachanna and Cleopatre. The real name of Powhatan, it seems, was Wah-un-so-na-cook. This powerful Indian sagamore was at first attended by a bodyguard of forty or fifty tall warriors, which was increased to two hundred after hostilities commenced with the English.

Captain Smith informs us that "every night upon the foure quarters of his house are four sentinels, each from other a slight shoot, and at every halfe houre one from the corps on guard doth hollow, shaking his lips with his finger betweene them, unto whom every sentinel doth answer round from his stand; if any faile, they presently send forth an officer that beateth him extremely." This is the first description we have of the Indian warwhoop still in vogue among certain tribes, and while it was a safeguard to prevent surprise, it must have tended to murder sleep about every half-hour during the watch of the night.

We also read that Powhatan had a fleet, of which he was very proud. It consisted of a large number of the canoes called "dugouts," which are still in use among some tribes of Indians. These boats were made by a very laborious process. Trees of a kind of timber which would float readily were felled by fire and from the trunks a boat was shaped and hollowed out by means of burning and scraping with shells and tomahawks.



The family of Powhatan was numerous and influential. Besides his sons and daughters there were also three brothers younger than himself; and upon them successively (and not his sons) according to their several ages, custom seems to have required that the government should devolve after his own death. The eldest, Opitchipan, accordingly succeeded him, in form at least.

But this chief proved to be an inactive and unambitious man, owing in part to the fact that he was well advanced in years. He was soon thrown into the shade by the superior energy and greater talent of Ope-chan-ca-nough, who, before many years, ruled the entire federation acquired by Powhatan. Of the younger brother, Kekataugh, scarcely anything is known. He is thought to have died before an opportunity occurred to show his ability in a public station.



It was Ope-chan-ca-nough, then sachem of the Pamunkies, who captured the indomitable Captain Smith while the latter was engaged in exploring the Chickahominy river.

Having gone as far as they could in a barge, Captain Smith left it moored in the middle of a small lake out of the reach of the savages on the banks, and accompanied by Robinson, Emry and two friendly Indians, pushed on up the stream in a smaller boat.

Those with the barge were ordered on no account to go ashore. But the order was disobeyed and they came near forfeiting their lives by their rashness, for two or three hundred Indians lay in ambush on the banks.

When, on landing, the English discovered the crouching savages, they fled precipitately to their boat and escaped, leaving one of their number, George Cassen, a prisoner. Of him, the Indians compelled to show the

direction taken by John Smith, after which he was put to death in a barbarous manner.

(Note - from George State University archives) While exploring the Chickahominy River, Smith left some men in a boat and went on shore. While he was gone, the men spotted women along the banks. The colony had no women. The Indian women appeared friendly, so the men left the boat against Smith's instructions and walked into a trap. Men from the Chickahominy tribe had been waiting under cover to ambush Smith's men, who ran to escape. One, George Cassen, did not make it. He was not killed outright; instead, he was tied between stakes, stripped naked, and tortured to death. Excoriated by seashells, head first, his skin was then burned before his eyes; his fingers were cut off piece by piece, and his entrails taken out and burned. Still alive, Cassen was then burned to death. This death demonstrated sheer brutality on par with the English form of execution of being drawn and quartered. Smith and the men he had brought to shore heard sounds of alarm, but too late to rescue Cassen. They ran, trying to save themselves, and were cut down by the Indians. Smith alone of the English on shore survived; he slipped and fell and was captured. Not wanting to meet the same fate as Cassen, Smith resolved to convince the Indians that he was an important man, a useful man to know. He showed them a compass, made a grand speech, and somehow was spared for the moment and taken on a long journey to meet the great chief, Powhatan.

Smith's party was overtaken among the Chickahominy swamps or "slashes," as they are called in Virginia, John Robinson and Thomas Emry were killed and Smith himself captured, but only after a terrible resistance. He fought like a lion at bay, tied one of the Indian guides to his left arm for a shield, killed three Indians, wounded several others and would have escaped had he not stepped backward into a deep quagmire.

(Note) Thomas Emry, a carpenter, was born c. 1585 in England. In 1606, he embarked on a grand adventure. He boarded one of the ships of the Jamestown fleet and sailed to Jamestown. Arriving in the spring of 1607, these were the first colonists to settle in Virginia. The summer of 1607 was particularly hard on the colonists, and almost half of them perished from disease, famine, and warring with the Indians. In the Fall of 1607, Thomas Emry and John Robinson went with Captain John Smith to explore the Chickahominy River. The Pamaunkee Indians discovered where they had gone and followed, a group of about 300 bowmen, led by their king. While searching for Captain Smith, the Indians divided up, searching the turns of the river, and found Robinson and Emry by a fireside. They shot them full of arrows and killed them. Then, searching further, they found and captured Captain Smith. Smith was later released, and, upon his return to Jamestown some attempted to have him executed for the lives of Robinson and Emry, on the pretense that he was at fault for their deaths. Thomas Emry died on 26 Dec 1607, near Jamestown.



He now surrendered to the Indian sachem Ope-chan-ca-nough, who conducted him in triumph through the Indian villages on the Potomac and the Rappahannock, thence to his own town, Pamunkey. At this place the medicine men practiced incantations and ceremonies for the space of three days, hoping to obtain some insight into the mysterious character and designs of the captive in order to determine his fate. By this time Smith had so overawed his captors that they feared to inflict the death penalty without the concurrence of their great werowance, Powhatan. Accordingly he was conveyed to We-ro-wo-co-mo-co, the favorite home of this chieftain of the chiefs, on the York river, a few miles from the historic field of Yorktown.

(Note) The York River is a navigable estuary, approximately 34 miles long in eastern Virginia. It ranges in width from 1 mile at its head to 2.5 miles near its mouth on the west side of Chesapeake Bay. Its banks were inhabited by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. In 2003 evidence was found of the likely site of Werowocomoco, one of two capitals used by the paramount chief Powhatan before 1609. The site was inhabited since 1200 as a major village. Enormously important in later U.S. history, the river was also the scene of early settlements of the Virginia Colony.

Arriving at We-ro-wo-co-mo-co, Captain Smith was detained near the town until preparations had been made to receive him in state. When Powhatan and his train had time to array themselves in all "their greatest braveries" the noted prisoner was admitted to the great chief's presence. Powhatan "looked every inch a king" as he sat on a kind of throne in the longhouse, covered with a robe of raccoon skin, and with a coronet of immense gaily colored plumes on his head. His two favorite daughters sat on right and left while files of warriors and women of rank, his favorite wives or sisters, were ranged around the hall.

On Smith's entrance into the hall of state a great shout arose from those present. At a signal a handsome Indian woman, perhaps a sister of the great chief, whom Smith styles "the Queen of Appamatuck," brought water in a copper basin to wash the prisoner's hands, while her companion presented a bunch of feathers with which to dry them.

Powhatan now proceeded to question Smith closely as to where he was from, where he was going, what brought the whites to his country, what were their intentions, what kind of a country they lived in and how many warriors they had. No doubt the captain was equal to the occasion, but it is quite probable that the grim old savage regarded him as a liar.

Again quoting Smith, "A long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan, then as many savages as could, layd hands on him, dragged him to them and thereon layd his head," in position to be crushed with a war club. A stalwart warrior was appointed executioner. The signal was given, the grim executioner raised his heavy war club and another moment had decided the fate both of the illustrious captive and his colony.

But that uplifted bludgeon was not destined to fall upon the head of Smith. Matoaka, or Pocahontas, the eldest daughter of Powhatan, sprang from her seat, and rushing between the big warrior and his intended victim, she clasped "his head in her arms and laid her own upon his to save him from death." She held on with the resolution of despair until her father, yielding to her frantic appeals, lifted them up and ordered Smith to be released. "The Emperor was contented; he should live to make him hatchets" (like the one Newport had presented) "and her beads and copper trinkets."

(Note) taken from - "Bridenbaugh Carl, Jamestown, 1544-1699 (1980); Smith John, The General Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles, originally published in 1624." He demanding for their captain, they showed him Opechankanough, king of Pamaunkee, to whom he gave a round ivory double compass dial. Much they marveled at the playing of the fly and needle, which they could see so plainly and yet not touch it because of the glass that covered them. But when he demonstrated by that globe-like jewel the roundness of the earth and skies, the sphere of the sun, moon, and stars, and how the sun did chase the night round about the world continually; the greatness of the land and sea, the diversity of nations, variety of complexions, and how we were to them antipodes, and many other such like matters, they all stood as amazed with admiration. Notwithstanding, within an hour after they tied him to a tree, and as many as could stand about him prepared to shoot him: but the king holding up the compass in his hand, they all laid down their bows and arrows, and in a triumphant manner led him to Orapaks, where he was after their manner kindly feasted, and well used.

At last they brought him to Werowocomoco, where was Powhatan, their emperor. Here more than two hundred of those grim courtiers stood wondering at him, as he had been a monster; till Powhatan and his train had put themselves in their greatest braveries. Before a fire upon a seat like a bedstead, he sat covered with a great robe, made of raccoon skins, and all the tails hanging by.

On either hand did sit a young wench of sixteen or eighteen years, and along on each side the house, two rows of men, and behind them as many women, with all their heads and shoulders painted red, many of their heads bedecked with the white down of birds, but every one with something, and a great chain of white beads about their necks. At his entrance before the king, all the people gave a great shout.

The queen of Appamatuck was appointed to bring him water to wash his hands, and another brought him a bunch of feathers, instead of a towel to dry them. Having feasted him after their best barbarous manner they could, a long consultation was held, but the conclusion was, two great stones were brought before Powhatan: then as many as could laid hands on him, dragged him to them, and thereon laid his head, and being ready with their clubs to beat out his brains, Pocahontas, the king's dearest daughter, when no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save his from death: whereat the emperor was contented he should live to make him hatchets, and her bells, beads, and copper; for they thought him as well of all occupations as themselves. For the king himself will make his own robes, shoes, bows, arrows, pots; plant, hunt, or do anything so well as the rest.



Two days after, Powhatan having disguised himself in the most fearfulest manner he could, caused Captain Smith to be brought forth to a great house in the woods, and there upon a mat by the fire to be left alone. Not long after, from behind a mat that divided the house was made the most dolefullest noise

he ever heard; then Powhatan, more like a devil than a man, with some two hundred more as black as himself, came unto him and told him now they were friends, and presently he should go to Jamestown, to send him two great guns, and a grindstone, for which he would give him the county of Capahowosick, and for ever esteem him as his son Nantaquoud."

Historian John Clark Ridpath (April 26, 1840 – July 31, 1900) well says, "There is no reason in the world for doubting the truth of this affecting and romantic story, one of the most marvelous and touching in the history of any nation."

Bancroft also records the incident as a historical fact and moralizes on it by saying, "The gentle feelings of humanity are the same in every race and in every period of life; they bloom, though unconsciously, even in the bosom of a young Indian maiden."

The truth of this beautiful story was never doubted until 1866, when the eminent antiquarian, Dr. Charles Deane, of Cambridge, Massachusetts, in reprinting Smith's first book, "The True Relation of 1609," pointed out that it contains no reference to this hair-breadth escape. Since then many American historians and scholars have concluded that it never happened at all, and in order to be consistent they have tried to prove that Smith was a blustering braggadocio, which is the very last thing that could in truth be said of him. The rescue of a captive doomed to death, by a woman, is not such an unheard-of thing in Indian stories.

If the truth of this deliverance be denied, how then did Smith come back to Jamestown loaded with presents when the other three men were killed, George Cassen, in particular, in a most horrible manner? And how is it, supposing Smith's account of it to be false, that Pocahontas afterward frequently came to Jamestown with her attendants bringing baskets of corn and was, next to Smith himself, the salvation of the colony? She was also sent by her father to intercede with Smith for the release of prisoners. The fact is, nobody doubted the story in Smith's life time and he had enemies enough. Pocahontas never visited Jamestown after Smith went to England in October, 1609, until she was kidnapped and taken there in April, 1613, by the infamous Captain Argall, with the aid of Japazaws, the chief sachem of the Patawomekes or Potomacs.

It is true there is no mention of Pocahontas saving the life of Smith in the "True Relation," but it must not be forgotten that it is confessed that the editor came upon his copy at second or third hand; that is, we suppose that it had been copied in MS. He also confesses to selecting what he thought "fit to be printed." "Can any one doubt," says Eggleston, "that the 'True Relation' was carefully revised, not to say corrupted, in the interest of the company and the colony?"

And, if so, what more natural than that the hostility of so great a chief as Powhatan would be concealed? For the great need of the colony was a fresh supply of colonists. Nothing would have so much tended to check emigration to Virginia (especially women) as a belief that the most powerful neighboring prince was at war with the settlement."

But John Smith does mention the thrilling incident in his letter to Queen Anne, on behalf of his protege, and rings the changes on it. Said he, "Pocahontas, the King's most dear and well-beloved daughter, being but a child of twelve or thirteen years of age, whose compassionate, pitiful heart, of desperate estate, gave me much cause to respect her." . . . For "at the minute of my execution she hazarded the beating out of her own brains to save mine; and not only that, but so prevailed with her father that I was safely conducted to Jamestown."

The amiable young "princess," Pocahontas, became the first convert to the Anglican religion in Virginia, as well as the first bride, when she married John Rolfe, in 1613. At her baptism she received the name "Lady Rebecca," no doubt in allusion to Rebekah, the wife of Isaac, who became the mother of two distinct nations and two manner of people.



THE WEDDING OF POCAHONTAS.

With John Rolfe

In 1616 she and her husband went to England. Here the "Lady Rebecca" received great attentions at court and was entertained by the Bishop of London. Pocahontas remained in England about a year; and when, with her husband and young son, she was about to return to Virginia, with her father's counselor, Tomocomo, she was seized with smallpox at Gravesend and died in June, 1617, aged twenty-two.



View of GRAVESEND, in Kent.

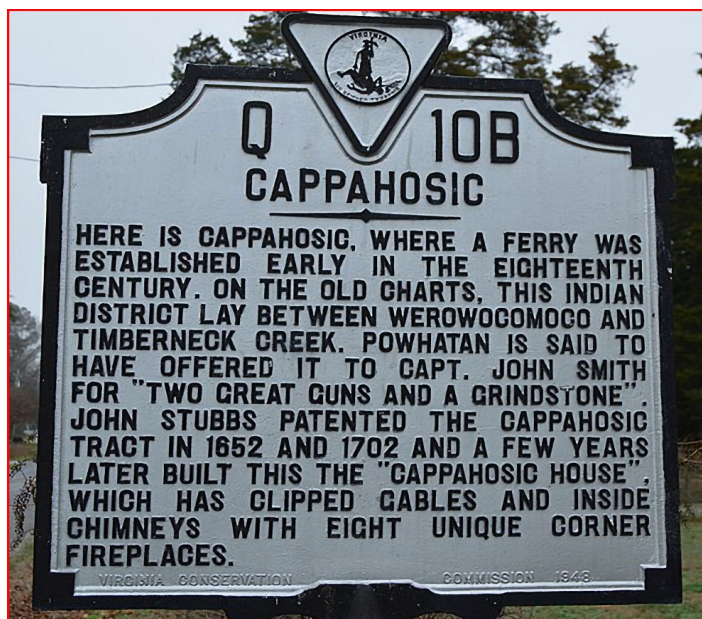
(Note) Gravesend is a town in northwest Kent, England, situated 21 miles east-southeast of Charing Cross (central London) on the south bank of the River Thames. It was an important starting point for voyages upon the Atlantic Ocean. An American sculptor, William Ordway Partridge, created a life-size statue of the 17th-century Native American princess Pocahontas, which was unveiled at Jamestown, Virginia in 1922. Queen Elizabeth II viewed this statue in 1957 and again on 4 May 2007, while visiting Jamestown on the 400th anniversary of foundation, it being the first successful English colonial settlement in America.

It may assist the reader to remember the place by recalling that at Gravesend her beautiful life came to an end and she found a grave under the chancel of the parish church.

John Rolfe returned to Virginia and became a prominent official of the colony. His son, Thomas Rolfe, was taken to London, where he was brought up by an uncle. When he grew into a young man he came to Virginia, and, as "Lieutenant Rolfe," commanded Fort James, on the Chickahominy.

In 1644, when about twenty-six, he petitioned the Governor for permission to visit his great uncle, Ope-chan-ca-nough, and his aunt, Cleopatre, who still lived in the woods on the York river. He married a young lady of England, became a gentleman of "note and fortune" in Virginia, and some of the most prominent families of that State are descended from him.

John Randolph, of Roanoke, was the best known of his descendants and was proud of his Indian blood. His manner of walking and the peculiar brightness of his eyes are said to have shown his origin, and he once said he came of a race who never forgot a kindness or forgave an injury. Randolph was sixth in descent from Pocahontas, through Jane Rolfe, her grand-daughter. "And," as John Esten Cook says, "the blood of Powhatan mingled with that of his old enemies. Dead for many years, and asleep in his sepulcher at Orapax, the savage old Emperor still spoke in the voice of his great descendant, the orator of Roanoke."



The crafty Powhatan, seeing how much superior the English weapons were to his own, determined to possess some of them. Accordingly, after sparing the life of Captain Smith, he told him that they were now friends and that he would presently send him home, and when he arrived at Jamestown he must send him two great guns and a grindstone.

He called him his son and give him the country of Capahowosick.



Smith was shortly afterward sent to Jamestown with twelve guides and arrived safely after seven weeks' captivity. Here he treated his Indian guides with great hospitality and showed Rawhunt, their leader, two demi-culverins (long cannon carrying a nine-pound shot) and a millstone to carry to Powhatan. The Indians, however, "found them somewhat too heavy." To give them a wholesome fright, Smith caused a cannon to be loaded with stone and fired among the boughs of trees filled with icicles. The effect may easily be imagined. Presents of various toys and trinkets were now given the Indians for Powhatan and his family and they went away satisfied.

During the same winter Smith visited Powhatan in company with Captain Christopher Newport. Attended by a guard of thirty or forty men they sailed as far as We-ro-wo-co-mo-co the first day. Here Newport's courage failed him. But Smith, with twenty men, went on and visited the chief at his town.

Powhatan exerted himself to the utmost to give his adopted son a royal entertainment. The warriors shouted for joy to see Smith; orations were addressed to him and a plentiful feast provided to refresh him after his journey. The great sachem received him, reclining upon his bed of mats, his pillow of dressed skin lying beside him with its brilliant embroidery of shells and beads, and his dress consisting chiefly of a handsome fur robe.

Along the sides of the house sat twenty comely females, each with her head and shoulders painted red and a great chain of white beads about her neck. "Before these sat his chiefest men in like order, and more than fortie platters of fine bread stood in two piles on each side of the door. Foure or five hundred people made a guard behind them for our passage; and Proclamation was made, none upon paine of death to presume to doe us any wrong or discourtesie.

With many pretty discourses to renew their old acquaintance, this great king and our captain spent the time, till the ebbe left our barge aground. Then renewing their feast with feates, dauncing and singing, and such like mirth, we quartered that night with Powhatan."

The next day Captain Newport came ashore and was received with savage pomp, Smith taking the part of interpreter. Newport presented Powhatan with a boy named Thomas Savage/Salvage. In return the chief gave him a servant of his named Namontack, and several days were spent in feasting, dancing and trading, during which time the old sachem manifested so much dignity and so much discretion as to create a high admiration of his talents in the minds of his guests.

(Note) Thomas Savage/Salvage arrived in Jamestown in 1608 at the age of 13 on the ship "John and Francis"; soon thereafter, Captain Newport gave him to Chief Powhatan to learn the Algonquin language and promote trade between the English and the Indians. Powhatan was fond of Savage, and he lived at Werowocomoco among the Indians for nearly three years until the First Anglo-Powhatan War (1609-1614) broke out. In 1610, aware that he might be in danger, Savage invented an excuse to go to Jamestown on an errand and stayed there.

Peace then prevailed after the 1614 marriage of John Rolfe and Pocahontas. Savage returned to Werowocomoco to try, with Ralph Hamor, to help arrange a marriage between Powhatan's youngest daughter and Sir Thomas Dale. When Powhatan saw Savage again, he scolded Savage for escaping: "My childe you are welcome, you have bin a straunger to me these foure yeers, at what time I gave you to go to Paspahae [Jamestown] . . . to see your friends, and till now you never returned."

What Savage did between 1614 and 1619 is unknown, but by 1619 he was living on the John Martin plantation. In 1621 Savage and John Pory went to the Eastern Shore where the Occohannock and Accomack Indians lived on two trading expeditions. The tribes were friendly to the English and Savage became good friends with Esmy Shichans, the Laughing King of the Eastern Shore.

By 1618 Powhatan was dead, and Opechancanough controlled the Powhatans. He then plotted to kill the English by poisoning them with a deadly plant found in Accomack and needed to obtain it from Esmy Schicans, who refused to give it to him. Shichans warned Savage of the danger; Savage informed Governor Sir Francis Wyatt, who believed Opechancanough wanted peace and did not heed the warning. On 22 March 1622, Opechancanough led the Powhatans in an attack that killed over 347 colonists, beginning the Second Anglo-Indian War (1622-1632).

Governor Yardley and William Eppes forced Savage to serve as the official interpreter of Accomack from 1625 to 1627. In 1621 Esmy Shichans gave Savage 9,000 acres of land in Accomack that became and still is known as Savage's Neck. In 1623 Savage married Hannah (also called Ann) who had come to VA in 1621 on the ship Seaflower.

Their son John, born in 1624, served in the House of Burgesses. Savage prospered as a fur trader and established a plantation called Savage's Choice, having been an Ancient Planter, as well as Indian Interpreter. He died before September 1633, when his son John inherited his land. His wife Ann had remarried planter Daniel Cugley by 1638.

Later John Pory wrote about Savage's service as an Indian interpreter: "With much honestie and good successe hath [Savage] served the publicke without any publicke recompence; yet had an arrow shot through his body in their service."

Captain Newport had brought with him a variety of articles for barter, such as he supposed would command a high price in corn. Not finding the lower class of Indians profitable, as they dealt on a small scale and had but little corn to spare, he was anxious to drive a bargain with Powhatan himself. This, however, the haughty chief affected to decline and despise.

"Captain Newport," said he, "it is not agreeable to my greatness to truck in this peddling manner for trifles. I am a great werowance and I esteem you the same. Therefore lay me down all your commodities together; what I like I will take and in return you shall have what I conceive to be a fair value."

Newport fell into the trap. He did as requested, contrary to Smith's advice. Powhatan selected the best of his goods and valued his corn so high that Smith says it might as well have been purchased in old Spain. They did not get four bushels, where they expected twenty hogsheads.

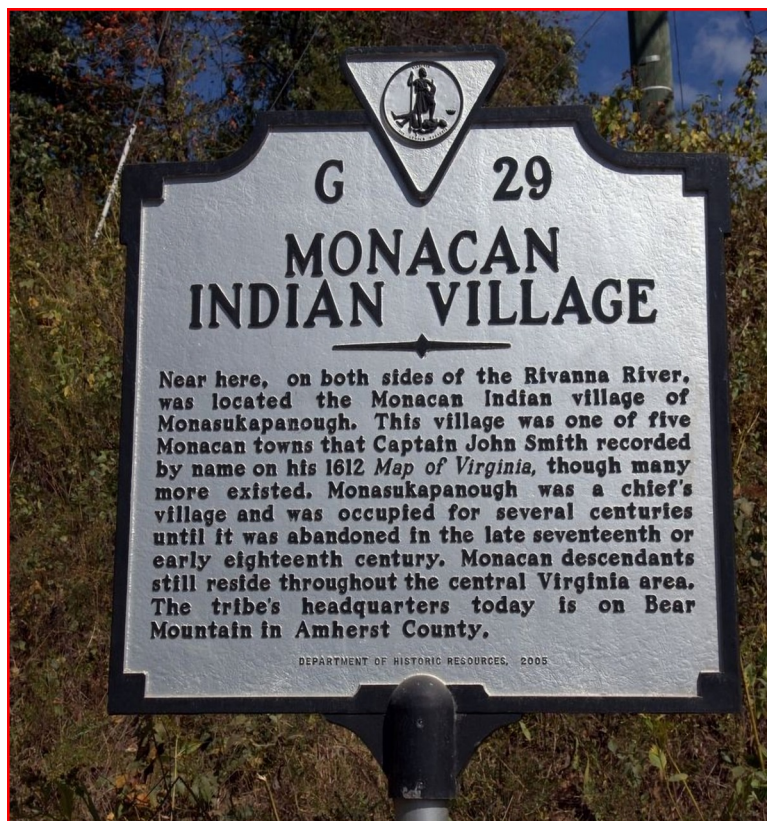
It was now Smith's turn to try his skill; and he made his experiment not upon the sagacity of Powhatan but upon his simplicity. Picking up a string of large brilliant blue beads he contrived to glance them as if by accident, so that their glint attracted the eye of the chief, who at once became eager to see them. Smith denied having them, then protested he could not sell them as they were made of the same stuff as the sky and only to be worn by the greatest kings on earth.

Powhatan immediately became "half-mad" to own "such strange jewels." It ended by Smith securing two or three hundred bushels of corn for a pound or two of blue beads. Having loaded their barges, they floated with the next tide. They also visited Ope-chan-ca-nough before their return and "fitted this chief with blue beads on the same terms."

On September 10, 1608, Smith was made President of the colony and things had begun to run smoothly when the marplot Newport returned with several wild schemes. He brought with him orders from King James for a coronation of Powhatan as Emperor, together with elaborate presents for the old chief. A more foolish thing was never perpetrated. Smith, with his usual hard sense, protested against it.

He well knew that it would tend to increase the haughty chief's notions of his own importance and make it impossible to maintain friendly relations with him. Finding his opposition in vain he insisted on at least trying to get Powhatan to come to Jamestown for the ceremony, and even offered to go himself and extend the invitation to the chief.

Smith took with him four companions only and went across the woods by land, about twelve miles, to We-ro-wo-co-mo-co. Powhatan was then absent at a distance of twenty or thirty miles. Pocahontas immediately sent for him and he arrived the following day. Smith now delivered his message desiring him to visit "his father" Newport at Jamestown for the purpose of receiving the newly arrived presents and also concerting a campaign in common against the Monacans. But this proud representative in the American forest of the divine right of kings haughtily replied, "If your King has sent me a present, I also am a King and this is my land; eight days I will stay to receive them. Your father is to come to me, not I to him, nor yet to your fort neither will I bite at such a bait; as for the Monacans I can revenge my own injuries."



(Note) When the first colonists arrived at Jamestown in 1607, they immediately met with Indian people on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. These Indians belonged to a vast Powhatan autocracy and spoke Algonquian languages. In the piedmont and mountain regions of this area lived Siouan Indians of the Monacan and Mannahoac tribes, arranged in a confederation ranging from the Roanoke River

Valley to the Potomac River, and from the Fall Line at Richmond and Fredericksburg west through the Blue Ridge Mountains.



"This is the lofty potentate," says a charming writer, "whom Smith could have tickled out of his senses with a glass bead and who would have infinitely preferred a big shining copper kettle to the misplaced honor intended to be thrust upon him, but the offer of which puffed him up so beyond the reach of negotiation."

After some further general conversation Smith returned with his answer. If the mountain would not come to Mahomet, then Mahomet must go to the mountain. The presents were sent by water around to We-ro-wo-co-mo-co and the two captains with a guard of fifty men went by land. Smith describes the ridiculous ceremony of the coronation, the last act of which shows that the old sachem himself saw the size of the joke.

"The presents were brought him, his basin and ewer, bed and furniture setup, his scarlet cloak and apparel with much adoe put on him, being assured they would not hurt him. But a foule trouble there was to make him kneel to receive his crown; he not knowing the majesty, nor wearing of a crown, nor bending of the knee, endured so many persuasions, examples and instructions as tyred them all. At last by bearing hard on his shoulders, he a little stooped, and three having the crown in their hands, put it on his head, when by the warning of a pistoll the boats were prepared with such a volly of shot, that the king started up in a horrible feare, till he saw all was well. Then, remembering himself, to congratulate their kindness, he gave his old shoes (moccasins) and his mantell (of raccoon skins) to Captain Newport." The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse.

Little was heard of Powhatan for some time after this, except occasionally through the medium of some of his tribes, who refused to trade with the English in consequence of his orders to that effect. He had evidently become jealous, but appearances were still kept up, and in December, 1608, the Emperor (for he is now one of the crowned heads) invited the captain to visit him. He wanted his assistance in building a house, and if he would bring with him a grindstone, fifty swords, a few muskets, a cock and hen, with a quantity of beads and copper, he might depend upon getting a ship load of corn.



Smith accepted the invitation and set off with a pinnace and two barges manned by forty-six volunteers. It was on this occasion that a severe storm drove Smith and his men to seek shelter and spend Christmas with friendly Indians, where they enjoyed the good cheer and hospitality mentioned elsewhere in this narrative.

They reached We-ro-wo-co-mo-co January 12, quartered without much ceremony at the first house they found, and sent to Powhatan for a supply of provisions. The wily old chief furnished them with plenty of bread, venison and turkeys, but pretended not to have sent for them at all. In reply Smith asked if he had forgotten his own invitation thus suddenly, and then produced the messengers who had carried it, and who happened to be near at hand.

Powhatan affected to regard the whole affair as a mere joke and laughed heartily. Smith reproached him with deceit and hostility. The chief replied by wordy evasions and seemed very indifferent about his new house. He demanded guns and swords in exchange for corn, which Smith, of course, refused. By this time the captain was provoked and gave the chief to understand that necessity might force him to use disagreeable expedients in relieving his own wants and the need of the colony.

Powhatan listened to this declaration with cool gravity and replied with corresponding frankness. Said he, "I will spare you what I can and that within two days. But, Captain Smith, I have some doubts as to your object in this visit. I am informed that you wish to conquer more than to trade, and at all events you know my people must be afraid to come near you with their corn so long as you go armed and with such a retinue. Lay aside your weapons then. Here they are needless. We are all friends, all Powhatans." The information here alluded to was probably gained from the two Dutchmen who had deserted the colony and gone among the Indians.

A great contest of ingenuity now ensued between the Englishman and the Indian, the latter endeavoring to temporize only for the purpose of putting Smith and his men off their guard. He especially insisted on the propriety of laying aside their arms.

"Captain Smith," he continued, "I am old and I know well the difference between peace and war. I wish to live quietly with you and I wish the same for my successors. Now, rumors which reach me on all hands make me uneasy. What do you expect to gain by destroying us who provide you with food? And what can you get by war if we escape you and hide our provisions in the woods? We are unarmed, too, you see. Do you believe me such a fool as not to prefer eating good meat, sleeping quietly with my wives and children, laughing and making merry with you, having copper and hatchets and anything else—as your friend—to flying from you as your enemy, lying cold in the woods, eating acorns and roots, and being so hunted by you meanwhile that if but a twig break, my men will cry out, 'There comes Captain Smith.' Let us be friends, then. Do not invade us with such an armed force. Lay aside these arms."

But Smith was proof against this eloquence, which, it will be conceded, was of a high order. Believing the chief's purpose was to disarm the English and then massacre them, he ordered the ice broken and the pinnace brought nearer shore. More men were then landed preparatory to an attack.

The white man and the Indian were well matched in general intelligence, insight into character and craftiness. No diplomacy inferior to that of the Indian Tidewater Titan could have so long retained the upper hand of Smith. No leader of less courage and resources than John Smith could so long have maintained a starving colony in the hostile dominions of the great Powhatan.

While waiting until the re-enforcements could land. Smith tried to keep Powhatan engaged in a lengthy conversation. But the Indian outwitted him. Leaving three of his handsomest and most entertaining wives to occupy Smith's attention, Powhatan slipped through the rear of his bark dwelling and escaped, while his warriors surrounded the house. When Smith discovered the danger he rushed boldly out. Flourishing his sword and firing his pistol at the nearest Indian, he escaped to the river, where his men had just landed.

The English had already traded a copper kettle to Powhatan for eighty bushels of corn. This was now delivered, and with loaded muskets they forced the Indians to fill the boat.

By the time this was done night had come on, but the loaded vessel could not be moved until high tide. Smith and his men must remain ashore until morning. Powhatan and his warriors plotted to attack them while at their supper. Once again Pocahontas saved Smith. Slipping into the camp she hurriedly warned him of his danger and revealed the whole plot. The captain offered her handsome presents and rewards, but with tears in her eyes she refused them all, saying it would cost her her life to be seen to have them.

Presently ten lusty warriors came bearing a hot supper for the English and urging them to eat. But Smith compelled the waiters first to taste their own food as an assurance against poison. He then sent them back to tell Powhatan the English were ready for him.

No one was permitted to sleep that night, but all were ordered to be ready to fight any moment, as large numbers of Indians could be seen lurking around. Their vigilance saved them, and with the high tide of the morning the homeward trip was commenced.

Such benefits resulted from the marriage of Rolfe and Pocahontas that Governor Dale piously ascribed it to the divine approval resting on the conversion of the heathen, and reflecting that another daughter of Powhatan would form an additional pledge of peace, sent Ralph Hamer and the interpreter, Thomas Savage, to Powhatan to procure a second daughter for himself.

They found the aged chief at Matchcat, further up the river than We-ro-wo-co-mo-co, and after a pipe of tobacco had been passed around Powhatan inquired anxiously about his daughter's welfare, "her marriage, his unknown son, and how they liked, lived and loved together." Hamer answered that they "lived civilly and lovingly together," and "that his daughter was so well content that she would not change her life to return and live with him, whereat he laughed heartily and said he was very glad of it."

Powhatan now asked the particular cause of Mr. Hamer's visit. On being told it was private, the Emperor ordered the room cleared of all except the inevitable pair of queens, who sat on either side of the monarch. Hamer began by saying that he was the bearer of a number of presents from Governor Dale, consisting of coffee, beads, combs, fish hooks and knives, and a promise of the much-talked-of grindstone whenever Powhatan would send for it. He then added that the Governor, hearing of the fame of the Emperor's youngest daughter, was desirous of making her "his nearest companion and wife." He conceived there could not be a finer bond of union between the two people than such a connection; and, besides, Pocahontas was exceedingly anxious for

her sister's companionship at Jamestown. He hoped that Powhatan would at least suffer her to visit the colony when he should return.

(Note) Captain Ralph Hamor (1589-1626) was one of the original colonists to settle in Virginia, and author of *A True Discourse of the Present State of Virginia*, which he wrote upon returning to London in 1615. Spellings of his first and last name vary; alternate spellings include "Raphe", "Hamer", and "Haman".



Ralph Hamor



Powhatan more than once came very near interrupting the delivery of this message. But he controlled himself, and when Hamer had finished, the Emperor gracefully acknowledged the compliment, but protested that his daughter had been three days married to a certain young chief. To this the brazen Hamer replied that this was nothing; that the groom would readily relinquish her for the ample presents which Governor Dale would make, and further that a prince of his greatness might easily exert his authority to reclaim his daughter on some pretext.

To this base proposition the old sachem made an answer of which the nobility and purity might have put to shame the unscrupulous Hamer. He confessed that he loved his daughter as his life and though he had many children he delighted in her most of all. He could not live without seeing her every day and that would be impossible if she went among the colonists, for he had resolved upon no account to put himself in their power or to visit them. He desired no other pledge of friendship than the one already existing in the marriage of his Pocahontas, unless she should die, in which case he would give up another child.

He concluded with the following pathetic eloquence: "I hold it not a brotherly part for your King to endeavor to bereave me of my two darling children at once. Give him to understand that if he had no pledge at all, he need not distrust any injury from me or my people. There has already been too much of blood and war; too many of my people and of his have already fallen in our strife, and by my occasion there shall never be any more. I, who have power to perform it, have said it; no, not though I should have just occasion offered, for I am now grown old and would gladly end my few remaining days in peace and quiet. Even if the English should offer me injury, I would not resent it. My country is large enough and I would remove myself further from you. I hope this will give satisfaction to my brother, he can not have my daughter. If he is not satisfied, I will move three days' journey from him and never see Englishmen more."

His speech was ended. The barbarian's hall of state was silent. The council fire un replenished had burned low during the interview and the great crackling logs lay reduced to a dull heap of embers—fit symbol of the aged chieftain who had just spoken.

As historian Francis Mason well says, "Call him a savage, but remember that his shining love for his daughter only throws into darker shadow the infamous proposition of the civilized Englishman to tear away the three days' bride from the arms of her Indian lover and give her to a man who had already a wife in England. Call him a barbarian, but forget not that when his enemies hungered he gave them food. When his people were robbed, whipped and imprisoned by the invaders of his country, he had only retaliated and had never failed to buy the peace to which he was entitled without money and without price. Call him a heathen, but do not deny that when he said that, if the English should do him an injury, he would not resent it but only move further from them, he more nearly followed the rule of the Master, of whom he was ignorant, than did the faithless, pilfering adventurers at the fort, who rolled their eyes heavenward and called themselves Christians."

No candid person can read the history of this famous Indian with an attentive consideration of the circumstances under which he was placed without forming a high estimate of his character as a warrior, statesman and a patriot. His deficiencies were those of education and not of genius. His faults were those of the people whom he governed and of the period in which he lived. His great talents, on the other hand, were his own and these are acknowledged even by those historians who still regard him with prejudice.

Smith calls him "a prince of excellent sense and parts, and a great master of all the savage arts of government and policy."

He died in 1618, just one year after the untimely death of Pocahontas, "full of years and satiated with fightings, and the delights of savage life." He is a prominent character in the early history of our country and well does he deserve it. In his prime he was as ambitious as Julius Cæsar and not less successful, considering his surroundings. He and Pocahontas were the real "F. F. V.'s," for, beyond controversy, they were of the "First Families of Virginia."



About the Author

Larry W Jones is a songwriter, having penned over 7,700 song lyrics. Published in 22 volumes of island themed, country, cowboy, western and bluegrass songs. The entire assemblage is the world's largest collection of lyrics written by an individual songwriter.

As a wrangler on the "Great American Horse Drive", at age 68, he assisted in driving 800 half-wild horses 62 miles in two days, from Winter pasture grounds in far NW Colorado to the Big Gulch Ranch outside of Craig Colorado.

His book, "The Oldest Greenhorn", chronicles the adventures and perils in earning the "Gate-to-Gate" trophy belt buckle the hard way.



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